

## Cycling Indiana: Two wheels, countless opportunities to ride your way



One day this spring, Mike Hufhand loaded his bike onto his car, headed south out of Indianapolis and drove to Brown County. A mountain biker, Hufhand was looking forward to what he calls, “hiking on two wheels.”

He wasn’t disappointed. He attacked the wooded hills outside Nashville on a warm, sunny day. “It was great,” he says. “And we saw so many new people out on the trails. We met people from other states, and from all over Indiana.”

It seems a lot of people are discovering what Hufhand’s known for years: Indiana is a great state for cycling – and not just for biking through the backwoods. Cyclists of all types find Indiana to be a perfect place to pedal.

If wheeling through the woods is your thing, you’ll love the state’s many well-developed mountain bike trails. On the other hand, if you prefer a smoother course, you’ll find miles of dedicated bike trails and shared-road circuits, as well as nationally recognized cycling events that offer everyone from elite riders to novices ample opportunities to sample the state’s varied terrain and breathtaking scenery.

### Hitting the road

You know there aren’t mountains in Indiana. But as you roll away from Ellettsville, a town just a few miles from Indiana University, you start to wonder. You pedal past cornfields and farm houses, and you suddenly notice gravity working against you. Soon you wonder

what wrong turn put you in the middle of a mountain range.

Welcome to the Hilly Hundred, the event that each October attracts thousands of riders to the back roads of Southern Indiana. Cited as one of the nation’s best cycling events by *Bicycling Magazine* and the League of America Bicyclists, the “Hilly” takes participants on a weekend jaunt around two 50-mile courses among autumn-tinted hills outside Bloomington.



Bean Blossom, Brown County

Each day’s 3,000 feet of climbing is relieved by well-organized rest stops with refreshments, fun and live entertainment. A favorite among cyclists of all abilities, the “Hilly” draws about 5,000 riders a year – which means you should book your accommodations early so you can stick around to enjoy Bloomington’s hospitality after your ride.

Interested in something a little less vertical? Look north, where the terrain is less lumpy but the scenery’s equally inviting. Marshall County has laid out four loops extending out from the town of Plymouth. Nicely mapped and clearly marked along sun-dappled roadways, the rides of 16, 31, 41 and 63 miles allow for peaceful at-your-pace days in the country

matched with the creature comforts of nearby Culver, where you'll find innovative eateries as well as accommodations ranging from cozy B&Bs to an upscale resort on the shores of Lake Maxinkuckee. A similar excursion awaits you in the Lincoln Hills/Patoka Lake area, where tourism officials have mapped out a variety of courses covering seven Southern Indiana counties.

If you enjoy organized tours, talk to the folks at Touring Ride in Rural Indiana. Each year, more than 500 people join "Triri" for weeklong journeys from one Indiana State Park to the next. With a caterer in tow and supported rides designed for scenic views and interesting side trips, Triri has become a hit with cyclists from across the country.

### **Goin' downtown**

Not every ride in Indiana is a trip through the countryside. If you like cycling in an urban setting, saddle up in Indianapolis. From downtown, head north on the Monon Trail and ride a 15-mile asphalt-topped former rail bed through neighborhoods, retail districts and wooded areas to the upscale restaurants, galleries and retail outlets in the suburb of Carmel.



**Monon Trail**

Or peel off onto one of the connecting greenways to travel a crushed-gravel path alongside a canal and past Butler University and the Indianapolis Museum of Art. You'll wind up just a quick coast away from the Indianapolis Zoo, Indiana State Museum and other attractions at

White River State Park. For a different view of the city, sign up for the annual Nite Ride, a midnight 20-miler that leads 2,500 cyclists along a blocked-off course through Indy's city streets – and to a heck of a party afterwards.

To see the latest in urban biking, check out the Indianapolis Cultural Trail. Although it's still a work in progress, it ultimately will add another 7.5 miles to the city's paved bikeways with the primary mission of linking key cultural hubs.

Looking to mix city and country? Check out the Cardinal Greenway, a 27-mile trail anchored in Muncie and wandering through cities, towns, farmland and countryside in North Central Indiana, or hit the many routes in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties.

### **Off-road adventures**

For people like Mike Hufhand, of course, cycling is a way to escape civilization. The president of the Hoosier Mountain Biking Association, Hufhand and his members put in 6,000 hours of volunteer work last year to develop trails throughout Indiana, with the latest achievement being the course in Brown County State Park. It's already being hailed nationally for its great layout, incredible terrain and amazing scenery.

Throw yourself at the outrageous switchbacks, stunning rock formations and unbelievable climbs – and drops – and you'll once again wonder if Indiana somehow shipped in some mountains. The 20 miles of trails challenge the heartiest riders, but also offer thrills

manageable by the relatively unaccomplished.

In the last few years, new mountain biking courses have cropped up in just about every corner of Indiana. For a quick sampling of offerings, check out the Department of Natural Resources' *Indiana Recreation and Fishing Guide*. It lists the 13 state parks, reservoirs and state forests offering mountain bike trails – as well as the many that feature tamer, paved bike paths.

### **Mutual admiration society**

Anyone who's traveled Indiana on two wheels will happily describe the scenery, attractions and towns they saw. But they'll usually add that the thing they love most about biking in Indiana is the people of Indiana.

Rob Klengler, who a few years ago rode from Washington State to Greenwich, New York, raves about Hoosiers. "They are the nicest people," he says.

A Seattle resident, Klengler was especially impressed by the little town of Monroeville. Just a short ride from the Indiana-Ohio border, Monroeville has earned a national reputation as a great place to stop if you're pedaling from coast to coast.

Monroeville does go out of its way for long-distance cyclists. It opens up a shelter, complete with a shower, place to sleep and TV. As Klengler rolled into town, people volunteered to lead him to the shelter and make sure he got everything he needed. "I stayed longer than I planned because everyone was so nice," Klengler says.

### **To learn more:**

The following web sites offer information, maps and links related to cycling options mentioned here as well as other resources on cycling in Indiana.

- Mountain Biking options: Hoosier Mountain Biking Association, [www.hmba.org](http://www.hmba.org)
- Hilly Hundred, Nite Ride and other Central Indiana cycling events: Central Indiana Bicycling Association, [www.cibaride.org](http://www.cibaride.org)
- General information about cycling in Indiana: Indiana Bicycle Coalition, [www.bicycleindiana.org](http://www.bicycleindiana.org)
- The Monon Trail and other Indianapolis-area trails: Greenways Foundation, [www.indygreenways.org/](http://www.indygreenways.org/)
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources: [www.in.gov/dnr/outdoor/2806.htm](http://www.in.gov/dnr/outdoor/2806.htm)
- Marshall County Tourism: [www.blueberrycountry.org](http://www.blueberrycountry.org)
- Touring Ride in Rural Indiana: [www.triri.org](http://www.triri.org)
- Cardinal Greenways: [www.delgreenways.org](http://www.delgreenways.org)
- Bloomington-Monroe County Tourism: [www.visitbloomington.com](http://www.visitbloomington.com)
- Brown County Tourism: [www.browncounty.com](http://www.browncounty.com)

**For more information about Indiana travel, log on to VisitIndiana.com or call (800) 677-9800.**

It's clear that cyclists have love Indiana, and it seems the feeling is mutual. Jeanne Bennett, the sales manager at the Artists Colony Inn in Nashville, raves about two-wheelers. "They're very friendly, very conscientious and very courteous," she says. Bennett's inn responds to this civility by catering to cyclists, offering a secure place to park their bikes at night and not protesting if they prefer to lug their rides to their rooms.

Brenda Miller, who, with her husband Homer owns the Scottish Bed and

Breakfast in Bremen, sounds a similar refrain. "We love having cyclists here," she says, adding that she also provides secure overnight storage for bikes, and an indoor pool where cyclists can soothe their tired muscles.

Both innkeepers proudly note that their health-conscious menus seem well-suited to cyclists, and Miller noted that, if cycling guests have their hearts set on starting a ride a few miles from her inn, she'll gladly load up their bikes and give them a lift – and pick them up again at the end of the ride.

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